2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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556 231 a great big lodge and all the other things that were required. But some men might have only one horse and therefore only one wife. Such men wouldn't amount to much; they would be by-passed all the time and couldn't get anywhere. Therefore men did really desperate things in order to obtain horses."[10]

556 231 735 Horses were thus the most valuable item in Gros Ventre economy. Other informants illustrated this attitude. Garter Snake, for instance, stated: "As a little girl I didn't know poverty. My parents were rich. They had everything they wanted for their lodge, and clothing, and all kinds of horses so I was never in want at any time. Nevertheless, my father, when he was a little fellow, was very poor and had no horse to ride. Possibly somebody would put his mother, who was a widow, on a horse, but he would have to walk. He had hardly any clothes, he was so poor. One time when he was about 12, the camp was moving and they were going to go quite a distance. He was way behind because he would wait until everybody had gone, and then would follow as best he could. This day he went up on a hill to see where the people were camping next, and then he just lay there crying because he pitied himself for being so poor. It was at this time that he was granted his first experience [with the supernatural]. Later on, having made an offering of a black shirt and some feathers, which he had begged from someone at the camp, and having cut off the first joint of the little finger of his left hand, he was told in a vision: 'Son, I invited you here and I am glad you came. Look over that way (the direction in which the camps lay). You are poor now, but see those camps? You are going to be noted there. Everyone there is going to respect you and depend on you. And look this way (the opposite direction). See that big band of horses? Those are your horses. Of course you won't get them right away, but that is what you are going to have.' He was granted many powers later on, among them how to operate with a woodpecker feather; how to check hemorrhage; how to cure stoppage of the male urinary tract; how to cure consumption; how to revive a horse which was 'played out'; how to make raiders invisible so they could successfully steal horses. And he finally attained those horses he had been shown."

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[10] Cf. Denig, p. 505, "An Indian with one wife cannot amass property."

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
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part and as good sports, but actual behavior not infrequently fell short of the code's demands. Bad feeling was at times engendered and could and did end in blows and violence, as was noted earlier in our account of the wheel game. Quarrels among gambling boys must have been fairly common. One of our informants, Thick, recounted three different bow and arrow contests for arrows, in which contests he had engaged as a boy with other boys. All three ended in violence started by the losers. In one of the three set-tos, Thick, the winner, was shot in the hand with an arrow by the other boy who lost his temper, and Thick still, at the age of 75, carries the scar. That the Gros Ventre were perfectly aware, as of course they must have been, of the discord hazard in gambling, is clear from such counsel as, for example, Thick's mother used to give him when he was a boy: "If you join in those gambling games somebody is going to get mad on account of getting beaten and he may pound you up." Further, that gambling often led to bad feeling was given to us by The Boy as the reason why the Gros Ventre disapproved of gambling between relatives.

So far as we could make out, Gros Ventre attitudes on gambling were determined in only minor measure by economic considerations. In the days before the disappearance of the buffalo in 1883-84, the Gros Ventre lived under a normal economy of abundance. Moreover, generosity in parting with their possessions, through gift and sharing, was focal in code and practice. Criers around the camp would counsel the people in words such as: "Men and women, don't love your property. You will always acquire other property. Only life never comes back, but property you can have back any time." In the long run for most individuals winnings would balance losses, just as gifts tended to balance gifts—a system of exchange which incidentally must have served to prevent unhealthy accumulation of wealth in the hands of any individual or small group. The cases of really ruinous loss of property through gambling, of reduction to "pauperism," appear to have been rare, and even in these cases the losers would ordinarily be looked after temporarily and tided over by their kin or friends. At any rate we got no record of individuals or their dependents suffering grave privation of the necessities of life as a result of gambling losses.

How far such facts entered into the Gros Ventre attitude toward gambling cannot be determined confidently from such evidence as we have. In our hours of free discussion with informants, there was almost no intimation of economic considerations leading to disapproval. One of the themes in the tongue-lashing Lame Bull got from his father after the disastrous contest with White Owl may have been the economic, but this was not expressly stated by The Boy. Mrs Warrior kept away from gambling because, she said: "I liked what I had and

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
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left, although we still have reports of a hand game between the Gros Ventre and the Flathead, staged at Glacier Park, Montana, as late as 1922, in which Joe Assiniboine represented the Gros Ventre. Today neither the wheel game nor the 2-button hand game is played. 525 182

Hard times, for a short period near-famine conditions, prevailed for a while after 1884; an economy of abundance gave place to an economy of scarcity. [735] While a world survey of gambling reveals, so far as we can discern, no significant correlation between gambling and abundance or scarcity economies, extreme and sudden economic shock and shift, such as occurred among the Gros Ventre in the years immediately following 1884, may well have slowed up the gambling pace.

Around 1897 the non-gambling hand game was introduced, won favor, and [177] persists down to the present. Today there is little gambling among the Gros Ventre on the reservation. Most of what occurs among them takes place off [178] the reservation, at nearby white villages and towns, in the form of poker or other card games for money, between Gros Ventre and whites.

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gave away in his honor." When first adopted the Grass dance offered only one such opportunity—and a relatively minor one. As times changed, however, the Grass dance provided practically the sole occasion for gaining prestige while at the same time carrying out the old pattern of kinship obligation by enhancing the prestige of relatives.

The possibility in the later form of the Grass dance of paying for privileges, such as locking the door, or whipping those who did not get up to dance, gave further scope for the acquisition of prestige through liberality, as did also, of course, payments at transfer of office.

It was estimated by our informants that around 1900 as much as a thousand dollars in goods and cash changed hands at a single performance of the Grass dance. At that time it was not uncommon for the dance to be held at weekly intervals. So long as the Gros Ventre were relatively prosperous and had property to display and exchange according to the older patterns, the Grass dance continued to function. With increasing poverty, however, along with other factors such as the changing points of view and interests on the part of the younger generation, and the dying out of the older warriors, the Grass dance, the core of which was the dog ritual, gradually paled off leaving but the remnants of some of the round dances which had been added to the Grass dance as originally adopted from the Assiniboine.

Summary

Between 1875 and 1880 the Gros Ventres received the Grass dance from the Assiniboine. From the date of adoption up to about 1890 the Grass dance was performed only by members of one of the two soldier societies and the custodians of the ceremonial equipment were the officers. Offices were transferred among members according to the old Gros Ventre pattern.

The essential core of the Grass dance was the dog ritual, a ceremonial eating of dog flesh, carried out by the owners of the equipment with the assistance of four warriors selected from among the lay members. Other features of the program at each